

The Use of “Recycled” Uranium at the Weldon Spring Site Resulted in Additional Contaminants at the Site

The Weldon Spring Site was one of a number of U.S. Department of Energy (previously operated by the Atomic Energy Commission) that received “recycled” uranium for processing – i.e., uranium that was obtained from chemical reprocessing of spent nuclear fuel and contained fission products (e.g., plutonium, americium and technetium). In 1999, press accounts compelled DOE to disclose its historic use of “recycled” uranium that contained plutonium and other fission products extracted from spent nuclear fuel.¹ DOE subsequently undertook an extensive review of the use of “recycled” uranium.²

The disclosure of this information resulted in Congressional support for a workers compensation bill³ and is useful for planning environmental cleanup and long-term stewardship requirements. Available information suggests that the Weldon Spring received relatively small amounts of this contaminated uranium feed, but historic records are incomplete. Although this information was disclosed after the remedial action at Weldon Spring was largely complete, there is no indication that a different approach to cleanup would have been taken if the disclosures had occurred earlier. Future monitoring plans will require that the potential for these additional contaminants be monitored for the indefinite future.

¹ Carroll James R. And James Malone, “Cold War Poison: The Paducah Legacy”, *The Courier-Journal*, June 25, 2000, at A1; and Joby Warrick, Uranium Plant Risks Were Concealed, *Washington Post*, Sept. 21, 1999, at A1.

² U.S. DOE, *A Preliminary Review of The Flow And Characteristics of Recycled Uranium Through The DOE Complex: 1952-1999* (2001) (DOE-F001-F001).

³ Energy Employees Occupational Illness and Compensation Program Act of 2000, Pub. L. No. 106-398, 114 Stat. 1654.